

A Narrative of the Freemasons word and signes.

142

First they discover other by signs next they go in private to discover, one sign is by giving their right hand a cast cross their foot from left to right with the tops of their fingers about 3 or 4 inches below their chin, another is by pulling of their hat wth their right hand their two first fingers above and the thumb and all the rest below the hat brim pulling it of and giving it a cast from left to right then on their head another is of drinking giving the y^e Ceba a cast cross und^r their chin from left to right: another is taking their hand Rth by the corner wth their right hand and throw it over their left shoulder. — Letting it hang down their back and so walk a few steps along if any meson see it they will follow and take him by the hand; their gripe for fellow craft is grasping their right hand in each other thrusting their thumb wide close upon the third joint of each oth^r first fing^r their Master gripe is grasping their right hand in each oth^r placing their four fingers nails hard upon the Carpus or end

FREEMASON'S SECRETS,

BEING A PORTION OF

THE SLOANE MS.,

3320,

BRITISH MUSEUM,

WITH LITHOGRAPHED FAC-SIMILE.

EDITED BY THE

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1872.

DEDICATION.

TO

BROTHER

W. J. HUGHAN, P.M. 131,

P. G. S. FOR CORNWALL,

THIS

little work

IS

MOST FRATERNALLY DEDICATED AS A TOKEN OF

REGARD AND ESTEEM,

AND MASONIC SYMPATHY,

BY

THE EDITOR.

P R E F A C E .

THE recent controversy with reference to the real age of the MS. relating to Freemasonry, contained in Vol, 3329, Sloane MSS., British Museum, has induced me to edit this carefully prepared copy of it, for the information of the Craft at large.

Many years ago my attention was particularly drawn to it, and from the moment I perused it, I was of the opinion, an opinion I have never yet seen cause to renounce, that, it was in itself a most interesting and important document, and especially valuable as regards the controversy then going on and still existing, with respect to the real antiquity of our order.

Mr. Wallbran, the learned editor of the Chartularies of Fountain's Abbey, fully shared my opinion respecting it, and supported that opinion by his superior and well-known authority, while at the same time he unhesitatingly fixed the date of the MS., with reference that is to its phraseology and archaisms, to the early part of the 17th Century.

He never, as far as I am aware, expressed any opinion as to the age of the handwriting.

When our able German Bro. Dr. Findel was in England in 1864 I called his attention to the MS., and what he thought of it then, may be seen in the "Mittheilungen" of the "Deutscher Verein" for that year.

I am afraid however, that I cannot in any way support his interesting and ingenious theory from the evidence adduced, that this is the MS. seen by Dr. Plot, though I am clearly of opinion, that Dr. Plot must have seen if not this very MS., at least a copy of it.

Indeed the original of this MS. may yet be found.

Latterly the antiquity of the MS. has been questioned, principally on account of the late character of the handwriting, and the date of the MS., as given by Mr. Wallbran and myself has been consequently impugned and denied.

I have therefore thought it well, with the consent of the Trustees of the British Museum, to print the MS. entire, and to obtain a fac-simile of the hand writing which, though so far unknown to the authorities of the British Museum, may yet be recognized by some student and reader of later MSS.

It may be said with reference to the MS., that though the character of the handwriting is probably not

earlier than 1710, the matter is of a much earlier date, and the MS. itself is clearly a transcript of an older Document.

The archaisms and peculiarities of spelling date really and truly, from any part of the 17th Century, but rather earlier than later, and I have myself no doubt whatever, that my learned and lamented friend Mr. Wallbran was quite right when he fixed the date of the MS. at not later than 1640.

It hardly seems necessary for me to point out to my brethren, what an important and valuable contribution to Masonic Archæology the MS. is, and how decisively it settles some recent controversies amongst us carried on with more zeal than discretion.

Although in all probability the production of a non-Mason, or of an uneducated one, it is independent testimony of the highest value, to the antiquity of the three-fold Division of our Order.

But I would refer all who are interested in the history of the MS., and who wish to obtain an accurate idea of it, to the "Observations" on it, which follow this Preface, and which though intended originally to be incorporated with it, I have thought well to leave in their separate and distinct character.

I beg then to commend this little contribution to Masonic Archæology, to the friendly kindness and intelligent criticism of my brethren.

I have to offer, before I conclude this Preface, my most sincere and hearty thanks to Mr. R. Sims, MS. Department British Museum, for his great kindness and most valuable assistance given to me, not for the first time in my Masonic Studies and Enquiries, and which have enabled me to make this little work, as I trust, so clear, complete and satisfactory to all who read it.

A. F. A. WOODFORD,

P. G. C.

Swillington Rectory,
Leeds,
August, 1872.

OBSERVATIONS UPON THE PAPER

INTITLED

"Freemasons' Words and Signes,"

IN SLOANE MS. 3329.

THE Sloane MS. 3329, in which is contained the Article upon Freemasonry, originally formed the last of three volumes of *Miscellaneous Papers*, collected by Sir Hans Sloane, and thus described in his own Manuscript Catalogue of his Library.

*3327 "Letters of Mr. Woolhouse. Loose papers of Natural History," &c.

3328 "Letters and loose papers as before."

3329 "A Volume of the same kind."

The general appearance of the two remaining volumes is the same, *i. e.* they are composed of a great number of miscellaneous papers, of all sizes, and in all kinds of handwriting, fastened upon guards, and spaced up and down, in binding, so as to form a folio of 14½ inches long and 10½ inches broad.

No. 3329, the volume in question, has 153 leaves, and contains, according to the New MS. Catalogue, no fewer than 44 separate articles. Of these only 25 of the principal are described by Ayscough. They are as follows:—

1. Sir John Finch. Epitaphium in Tho. Baines, equitem, sepultum Constantinopolis, 1682.
2. Account of inoculating for the small-pox six convicts in Newgate, 1721.

* No. 3327 is not at the British Museum, it was missing when Ayscough made a Catalogue of the Sloane Library in 1785.

3. Observations in planting Elm-trees.
4. D. Papin. Observations about the wheels of Carriages.
5. State of the question between M. Buissierre and Mr. Mery,
on the form of the heart of the terrestrial tortoise.
6. Method of making spirit of sulphur cheap and good.
7. Dr. Papin's reply to Mr. Waller's objections, in relation to
an improvement in clockwork.
8. Geoffroy. An astronomical observation read before the Royal
Society, July 19, 1711.
9. Account of burials in Florence from 1670 to 1678.
10. Observations on the marshy grounds of Kent and Essex.
11. Observation on some parts of Sicily.
12. Mr. Cuper. Observaciones de Modena.
13. Geoffroy. Chemical analysis of the lesser sort of sponge.
14. Observations on the power of wheels.
15. A scheme of a Voyage round the Globe, for the discovery of
Terra Australis incognita.
16. A fragment of Latin poetry.
17. Epitaphium Joh. Raii.
18. Robert Bradshaw. A brief account of the fixed private trade
at and about Chichester.
19. An account of import of Wines and Vinegar, from Midsum-
mer, 1670, to Michaelmas, 1677, London and out-ports.
20. An account of Tobacco brought into the port of London, from
Michaelmas 1682, to Michaelmas 1683.
21. Ant. Deschamps. Epistola ad Societatem Regiam, Oct. 10,
1708.
22. Will. Wilkins. Specimen of proposals for publishing the
art of embalming.
23. Tho. Burgh. Thoughts of improving the Harbour of Dublin,
1707.
24. *Narrative of the Free-masons words and signs.*
25. Memorial how to live under the Equinoctial, and the distem-
pers incident to the inhabitants of those climates, and
means of cure.

The foregoing description sufficiently indicates the miscellaneous nature of the Contents. It is not known by whom the Papers were arranged previous to binding, no *chronological* order has been observed in the process, neither has any *old* pagination been followed, for *none exists*. The leaves have been *twice* folio'd, in pencil, and at a comparatively recent date. Most of the Articles are un-dated, the earliest given date appears to be about 1677, the most recent, 1721.

The Article upon Free-masonry, which forms the subject of this publication, is described at No. 24 of the fore-going list, It consists of *one sheet only*, and is numbered ff. 142 and 143. The paper upon which it is written is of a fair texture, and measures 12 inches in length by 7½ broad. Both leaves have a *paper maker's mark*, that upon the first leaf being a *bugle horn, stringed, within an ornamental frame*, and upon the second, the initial letters **MOMP**.* The writing, as may be seen by the fac-simile here given, is clear and clerk-like, it fills three sides of the sheet, the "Oath" occupying the upper part of the fourth side, the rest of which is blank, with the exception of the endorsement (apparently by another hand) which, having been written when the paper was folded, occurs near the bottom of the page. The orthography does not evidence any great antiquity, certainly not older than the 17th century. A list of the chief peculiarities in spelling is here given.† The "Narrative" is not an original draft but an evident copy, as witness the words printed in *italics*, which are *interlined* in the original, arising from a mistake of the copyist in omitting to notice that the words "in form of a square" occur twice.

The observations made by Mr. Findel in a note at page 118 of the 2nd edition of his "History of Freemasonry," are curious

*The sheet having at one time been folded into four, and exposed to much wear when in that form, these letters, coming as they do upon one of the folds, are very indistinct.

† See paper attached.

as regards the peculiar expressions quoted by Dr. Plot in his *Observations on Freemasonry*, in the 2nd edition* of his "*Natural History of Staffordshire*, 1686," p. 316. Dr. P. *may* have seen *this copy*; we cannot say that it is *impossible*, judging by the hand-writing, we should say *that he did not*. There is nothing in the contents of the two volumes above-mentioned, to connect Dr. Plot with them. So far as we have observed, his handwriting is not to be seen in them. The paper headed "*Dr. Plot's Catalogue, MS.*" alluded to by Mr. Findel occurs at fo. 79 of the volume 3329, and consists of one leaf only *in the handwriting of Sir Hans Sloane*. But few of Dr. Plot's MSS. are in the Sloane Collection, and of these two only are in his handwriting, viz.:—a few Letters in No. 4055, and Articles 1—4 in No. 3646.

With reference to the *paper mark*, it is by no means uncommon upon paper of the 17th and 18th centuries. Several examples of the design upon the *first* leaf, (without date) occur in a volume of Collections of Paper Marks made by John Bagford, now amongst the Harleian MSS. at the British Museum, No. 5942. Bagford was born in 1657, and died in 1716.

* No copy of the 1st edit. 1677, at the British Museum.

MASONIC MS.

Variations in Spelling.

signes	...	for	...	signs
cross	...	„	...	across
breſt	...	„	...	breast
puling	...	„	...	pulling
of	...	„	...	off
crafte	...	„	...	craft
naile	...	„	...	nail
diſcribed	...	„	...	described
midle	...	„	...	middle
barley cornes	...	„	...	barley corns
hell	...	„	...	heel
forme	...	„	...	form
placeing	...	„	...	placing
pceive	...	„	...	perceive
toolcs	...	„	...	tools
lyes	...	„	...	lies
y ^m	„	...	them
y ^t	„	...	that
ſaftly	...	„	...	softly
worke	...	„	...	work
their	...	„	...	there
arme	...	„	...	arm
forceing	...	„	...	forcing
y ^e	...	„	...	the
bitt	...	„	...	bit
is	...	„	...	yes
ſignifye	...	„	...	signify
leasure	...	„	...	leisure
lett	...	„	...	let
puting	...	„	...	putting
returne	...	„	...	return

thô	...	„	...	though
sun	...	„	...	sun
psons	...	„	...	persons
beleife	...	„	...	belief
poynts	...	„	...	points
shew	...	„	...	show
secrett	...	„	...	secret
paine	...	„	...	pain
dogg	...	„	...	dog
caryed	...	„	...	carried
pinnicall	...	„	...	pinacle
doore	...	„	...	door
mettle	...	„	...	metal
jeweles	...	„	...	jewels
holly	...	„	...	holy
chapell	...	„	...	chapel
cloathes	...	„	...	clothes
arme	...	„	...	arm
gratfull	...	„	...	grateful
repley	...	„	...	reply
allways	...	„	...	always
joynts	...	„	...	joints
thurst	...	„	...	thrust
repleys	...	„	...	replies
swere	...	„	...	swear
mentall	...	„	...	mental
resarvation	...	„	...	reservation
foornoon	...	„	...	forenoon

A NARRATIVE
OF THE
Freemason's Word and Signes.

FIRST they discover others by signes next they go in private to discourse, one signe is by giving their right hand a cast cross their brest from left to right with the tops of their Fingers about 3 or 4 inches below their chin, anoth^r is by puling of their hat wth their right hand their two first fingers above and the thumb and all the rest below the hats brim puling it of and giving it a cast from Left to right then on their head anoth^r is of drinking giving the glass a cast cross und^r their chin from left to right: anoth^r is taking their handk^r by the corner wth their right hand and throw it over their Left should^r letting it hang down their back and so walk a few steps along if any mason see it they will follow and take him by the hand; their gripe for fellow crafte grasping their right hands in Each other thrusting their thumb naile close upon the third Joynt of each oth^rs first fing^r their Masters gripe is grasping their right hands in each oth^r placing their four finger's nails hard upon the Carpus or end of others wrists and their thumb nailes thrust hard directly between the second Joynt of the thumb and the third Joynt of the first Fing^r but some say the mast^rs grip is the same I last discribed only each of their midle Fing^r must reach an inch or three barly cornes Length higher to touch upon a vein y^t comes from the heart. Anoth^r signe is placing their right heell to

the inside of their left in forme of a square so walk a few steps backward and forward and at every third step make a Little stand placeing their feet Square as afores^d. this done if any masons p^{ce}ive it they will presently come to you if you come where any masons tooles lyes lay y^m. in forme of a square *they will presently know y^t. a free brother hath been their or a free broth^r. coming where free masons are at worke if he takes some of their tooles & lay y^m. in form of a square** it is a signe to discover him, or if he takes one of their tooles or his own staff and strike saftly on the wall or worke saying this bose or hollow if their be any free broth^r. at the work he will answ^r. it is solid w^{ch}. words are signes to discov^r. each oth^r. Anoth^r. signe some use bending their right arme in form of a Square & laying the palm of their left hand upon their heart. Another is by hoisting their eyes toward the east and twisting their mouth toward y^e. west. Anoth^r. is bending their right knee holding up their hand towards the east and if it be night or dark they will give two little haughts and a great one as if they were forcing a bone or a lump out of their throat, they will say y^e day is for seeing the night for hereing. Anoth^r. signe is by lending you a crooked pin or a bit of pap^r. cut in the forme of a square on receipt of w^{ch}. you must come from w^t. place or company soever you are in by virtue of your oath and by y^e aforementioned signe of y^e hat or hand you are to come if it were from the top of a Steeple to know their pleasure and to assist them. And to lett you know he wants money he will hold a bitt of pipe (or some such thing) to you saying can you change a cole pence if you have money you say is if you have none say no, some will signifye their want of money by pulling their knife out of the sheath and giving it to a broth^r. in company or alone if the broth^r. have money he takes the knife puting it in its sheath and

* On account of an error of the copyist, the words in *italics* are interlined in the original MS.

return it, if he have none he will return it bare as he receed. it: which many of them do notwithstanding their oath and many oth^r signes they reject, thô by oath are bound to obey all; Another signe is by taking their handk^r in their right hand and blow their nose then holding it straight out before them they give it two Little shakes and a big one. Anoth^r. signe is knocking at any door two little knocks and the third a big one. They have anoth^r signe used at the Table drinking when the glass goes not fast enough round they say star the guile.

To Discourse a mason in France, Spaine, or Turkey (say they) the signe is to kneel Down on his left knee and hold up his right hand to the sunn and the out landish Broth^r, will presently take him up but believe me if they go on their knees on that acco^t they may remain there; or any psons observe their signes as Long as y^e Jews remaine on their beliefe to rece. their wished for Mesias from the East.

Here followeth there private discourse By way of Question and Answer.

(Questⁿ.) Are you a mason. (Answ^r.) Yes I am a free-mason. (Q.) How shall I know that. (A.) By perfect signes and tokens and the first poynts of my entrance. (Q) Which is the first signe or token shew me the first and I will shew you the second. (A.) The first is heal and conceal or conceal and keep secrett by no less paine than cutting my tongue from my throat. (Q.) Where were you made a Mason. (A.) In a just and perfect or just and Lawfull Lodge. (Q) What is a just and perfect or just and Lawfull Lodge. (A.) A just and perfect Lodge is two Interprintices two fellow Craftes and two Mast^{rs}. more or fewer the more the merrier the fewer the bett^r. chear but if need require five will serve that is two Interprintices two fellow Craftes and one Mast^r on the highest hill or Lowest

Valley of the World without the crow of a Cock or the bark of a Dogg. (Q.) From whome do you derive your principalls. (A.) From a great^r than you. (Q.) Who is that on earth that is great^r then a freemason. (A.) He y^t was caryed to y^e highest pinnicall of the Temple of Jerusalem. (Q.) Whith^r is your Lodge shut or open. (A.) It is shut. (Q.) Where Lyes the Keys of the Lodge doore. (A.) The Ley in a bound Case or und^r a three cornered pavem^t about a foote and halfe from the Lodge door. (Q.) W^t is the key of your Lodge doore made of. (A.) It is not made of Wood, Stone, Iron, or Steel or any sort of mettle but the tongue of a good report behind a Broth^{rs} back as well as before his face. (Q.) How many Jewles belong to your Lodge. (A.) There are three the Square pavem^t the blazing Star and the Danty tassley. (Q.) How long is the Cable rope of your Lodge. (A.) As Long as from the Lop of the Liver to the root of the tongue. (Q.) How many Lights are in your Lodge. (A.) Three the Sun the mast^r and the Square. (Q.) How high is your Lodge. (A.) Without foots yards or Inches it reaches to heaven. (Q.) How stood your Lodge. (A.) East and west as all holly Temples stand. (Q.) W^{ch} is the Mast^{rs} place in the Lodge. (A.) The east place is the Mast^{rs} place in the Lodge and the Jewell resteth on him first and he setteth men to worke w^t the Mast^{rs} have in the foornoon the wardens reap in the Afternoon.

In some places they discourse as followeth (viz^t)

(Q.) Where was the word first given. (A.) At the Tower of Babylon. (Q.) Where did they first call their Lodge. (A.) At the holy Chapell of St. John. (Q.) Where stood your Lodge. (A.) As the said holy Chapell and all other holy Temples stand (viz.) east and west. (Q.) How many lights are in your Lodge. (A.) Two one to see to go in and another to see to work. (Q.) What were you sworne by. (A.) By god

and the square. (Q.) Whither above the Cloathes or und^r the C [loathes]. (A.) und^r the Cloathes. (Q.) under what Arme. (A.) und^r the right Arme. God is Gratfull to all Worshipfull Mast^{rs} and fellows in that Worshipfull Lodge from whence we last came and to you good fellow w^t is your name. (A.) J. or B. then giving the grip of the hand he will say Broth^r John greet you well you. (A.) Goe good greeting to you dear Broth^r.

Another salutation is giving the mast^{rs} or fellows grip saying the right worshipfull the mast^{rs} and fellows in that worshipfull Lodge from whence we Last came greet you greet you greet you well, then he will repley Gods good greeting to you dear Brother.

Anoth^r they have called the mast^{rs} word and is Maharyn which is allways divided into two words and standing close with their Breasts to each oth^r the inside of each oth^{rs} right Ankle joynts the Mast^{rs} grip by their right hands and the top of their Left hand fingers thrust close on y^e small of each oth^{rs} Backbone and in that posture they stand till they whisp^r in each oth^{rs} eares y^e one Maha- the oth^r repleys Ryn.

THE OATH.

The mason word and every thing therein contained you shall keep secrett you shall never put it in writing directly or Indirectly you shall keep all that we or your attend^{rs}. shall bid you keep secret from Man Woman or Child Stock or Stone and never reveal it but to a brother or in a Lodge of Freemasons and truly observe the Charges in a y^e Constitucion all this you promise and swere faithfully to keep and observe without any manne^r of Equivocation or mentall resarvation directly or Indirectly so help you god and by the Contents of this book.

So he kisses the book &c.

The readers of this little work will have, I think, appreciated the real value of this most interesting Manuscript. It serves, as it appears to me, to settle one or two matters of contemporary controversy.

It decides the “*vexata quæstio*” of the antiquity and independence of the Three Degrees, and proves as it appears to me completely and convincingly, that, the Three Degrees are alike of very early origin, and betray from first to last, the traces of a great antiquity.

And though perhaps the Manuscript is not in itself, of any great importance comparatively, and is probably as I said before, the compilation if not of a non-mason, yet at any rate of an uneducated one, it is still a valuable addition to the list of Masonic publications, and a very desirable contribution to the unexhausted store as yet, of our Craft History and Antiquities.

It has been published solely with a desire, to promote the Study of our Masonic Evidences and Documents, a study happily much on the increase in our Order, and which may be productive eventually of some lasting and valuable record of our truer and more accurate Masonic History.

A. F. A. W.









